**Feminist Theory**

Fall 2013, WOMNST 0500-1095, W-Course
Mondays and Wednesdays 4:30-5:45pm
2201 WW Posvar Hall

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**Office hours:** Mondays and Wednesdays 2:00pm-3:00pm; and by appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This is a discussion based, writing intensive course about the struggles, ideas, and debates that inform contemporary feminist thought. We will examine the relationship between feminist movements and feminist theory, learn about feminist epistemology and feminist research methods, and study the ways in which liberal, radical, post-colonial, and queer feminists conceptualize oppression and resistance. We will consider how gender is enacted through cultural norms and social interactions and its complex intersection with other social, cultural, and biological categories. To get the most out of this course, stay up-to-date on the readings, come to class with questions, engage with your peers during class, and open your mind to unconventional ideas and viewpoints.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES — By the end of the course you will be able to:**

- Critically read theoretical texts.
- Effectively use the critical vocabulary of feminist theory orally and in your writing.
- Define feminist standpoint theory and use it methodologically.
- Explain the key ideas and debates that define contemporary feminist theory.
- Communicate a critical understanding of intersectionality, including an awareness of gender and its complex intersections with other social, cultural, and biological categories, including but not limited to sex, race, ethnicity, class, nation, sexuality, ability, and age.
- Think critically and thoughtfully about the self and others through a deepened understanding of how social, cultural, and biological categories shape our lives and our understandings of the world.

**“W-COURSE,” WRITING INTENSIVE COURSE**

In accordance with University of Pittsburgh Writing-Across-the-Curriculum guidelines, you will produce a minimum of 25 pages of written text to fulfill w-course requirements. In addition, per recommendation of University guidelines, you will also complete written assignments during class. The take-home assignments are structured so that the workload is distributed over the course of the term. For help outside of class, I encourage you to visit the campus Writing Center, located in room 317B of the O’Hara Student Center (corner of O’Hara St. and University Place). The tutors there are incredibly helpful.

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1 Use this link to find out more about “W” courses  
[http://www.wid.pitt.edu/writing_intensive_courses/teachingexistingcourses.php](http://www.wid.pitt.edu/writing_intensive_courses/teachingexistingcourses.php)
REQUIRED BOOK AND READINGS
2. Readings marked “CW” on the class schedule are posted on CourseWeb. *Please read the readings in the order listed on the schedule.
3. News articles, podcasts, and videos will occasionally be assigned.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
Participation (see below)
In-Class Essays (7 x 5 points each) = 35 points
Analytic Essays (3 x 10 points) = 30 points
Participant Observation Paper = 15 points
Final Exam Essay (in class) = 20 points
Total points possible = 100 points

**There are grading rubrics available on CourseWeb for all of the graded assignments. Use these as a guide when completing the assignments.

PARTICIPATION
This class is a great opportunity for you to improve your verbal skills in an academic setting. In this class, you are expected to ask questions and “think out loud.” Participation includes attendance, arriving on time, doing in-class activities (these cannot be made up), giving the class your full attention, and discussing the readings. Occasionally, I will give you a questionnaire that asks you to evaluate your participation. I will consider these, along with my own observations of your participation, when I tally your final score for the course. If you are riding the line between letter grades at the end of the term, an outstanding attendance record and consistent contributions to class will work in your favor.

➔ You should expect to hear a range of responses about the course materials from your peers. I hope you will share your impressions of the texts even if you do not think your response is shared by others. Be conscientious of the fact that this is a diverse class, comprised of individuals who have different identities and life experiences. For example, do not assume that everyone is heterosexual or that they come from middle class families.

IN-CLASS ESSAY QUIZ (7 x 5 points = 35 points)
Throughout the semester, you will complete 7 in-class writing assignments, worth 5 points each. The assignments will not be announced in advance and they cannot be made up. There are no exceptions. If you stay up to date on the readings and study the class materials regularly, you have nothing to worry about. These are the kinds of in-class writing assignments you will complete for in-class activity points: Short essay quiz about assigned readings; Use a theoretical concept to analyze a TV show or song.

POP CULTURE ANALYTIC ESSAYS (3 x 10 = 30 points)
These will require you to address the major arguments in each of the units. You will write about 4-5 pages of text for each of the three units. Writing prompts will be posted on CourseWeb in the “Assignments” folder at least two weeks before the due date. 2 points will be deducted for each day it is late. These are the kinds of prompts you can expect:
• Discuss a particular popular culture phenomenon from the perspective of different feminist theorists and explain how they see this phenomenon differently.
• Use the concepts gleaned from theories of gender to analyze a controversial song or Hollywood film.
PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION PAPER (15 Points)
For the section on gender and sexuality, you will conduct a participant observation in a public setting (such as a football game or drag queen show) and analyze this setting using feminist research methods. To prepare for this assignment, we will use our October 28th class meeting to learn about feminist research methods and data analysis. Once you have collected your data, you will write a 5-6 page paper that analyzes the event (of your choosing) through the lens of feminist theories about gender and sexuality. I will post detailed instructions for this assignment on CourseWeb in advance of the October 28th workshop. Your paper is due on November 13th. 2 points will be deducted for each day it is late.

FINAL EXAM (20 points)
The final will be a comprehensive essay exam. It will consist of 5 essay questions of which you must answer 3. On the Monday before the exam, we will review and synthesize course materials. It is up to you to come prepared with specific questions for the exam and propose essay questions for the exam.

Extra Credit: The Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies program regularly holds exciting events on the University of Pittsburgh campus. This year’s theme is “Gender and the Global” and the schedule of events is available on the Program’s calendar: http://www.wstudies.pitt.edu/events. This semester, you are strongly encouraged to attend one of these events for up to 2 points extra credit. After you attend the GSW event, you have 1 week to turn in a 350 word essay about the event. First, use a few sentences to describe the event. Then, draw a link between the event and at least one of the theorists we have read this semester. What would this theorist (e.g. bell hooks or J. Jack Halberstam) say about this event? Then, make your own argument in support or against the issue(s) raised at the event.

CLASSROOM AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Electronic copies of assignments are not accepted. Do not send assignments via email.

Cell phones must be turned off. They distract me, you, and everybody else. If you need to have your phone on in case of emergency, let me know before class gets started.

Laptops cannot be used in class. This is an intimate classroom setting and we’ll keep it that way.

Non-Discrimination: The University of Pittsburgh, as an educational institution and as an employer, values equality of opportunity, human dignity, and racial/ethnic and cultural diversity. Accordingly, the University prohibits and will not engage in discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, marital status, familial status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, genetic information, disability, or status as a veteran. Visit http://www.cfo.pitt.edu/policies/policy/07/07-01-03.html for more information about the policy.

Academic Integrity: If you are caught cheating or plagiarizing, you will receive a zero and may be subjected to the proceedings outlined by the University of Pittsburgh academic integrity policy. To see the full list of violations: http://www.as.pitt.edu/fac/policies/academic-integrity

Reasonable Accommodation: If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and Disability Resources and Services, 140 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890 or 412-383-7355 (TTY) as early as possible in the term.
WEEK 1
Day 1: August 26th
Introduction: What is feminism?; How do gender binaries subordinate women as women?

Day 2: August 28th
Discussion Topic: Theory as Social Practice and Reading Analytical Texts
Discussion Questions: What is the purpose of feminist theory? Is it distinct from feminist practice?

WEEK 2
Day 1: September 2nd – LABOR DAY

Day 2: September 4th
Discussion Topic: Feminism’s Roots
Discussion Questions: How do the authors of the “Declaration” conceptualize ‘rights’? How do they make a claim that women should have the same rights as men? How does Truth’s speech shed light on white women’s privilege? Why does Hewitt challenge the legend of the Seneca Falls Woman’s Rights Convention?
- Read: Website blurb about Sojourner Truth and her speech, “Ain’t I a Woman?,” http://www.nps.gov/wori/historyculture/sojourner-truth.htm

WEEK 3
Day 1: September 9th
Discussion Topic: Women’s Liberation
Discussion Question: ‘What is a woman?’ What is “the problem”?
- Read: Friedan, Betty. “The Problem that has no Name,” (1963) CW

Day 2: September 11th
Discussion Topic: Women’s Liberation, Race and Class
Discussion Questions: Do all women have the same “problem”? How does women’s fight for equality reproduce social hierarchies? What other systems of domination must feminist fight against?
- Recommended Reading: Martinez, Elizabeth “La Chicana” (1972), Pp. 113-115, FTR

WEEK 4:
Day 1: September 16th
Discussion Topic: Women’s Liberation, Sexuality
Discussion Question: Why is lesbian a political identity? Are lesbians ‘women’?
- Read: Wittig, Monique. “One is Not Born a Woman,” Pp. 246-251, FTR

Feminist Theory 4
Day 2: September 18th
Discussion Topic: Myths about feminists
Discussion Question: Are feminists bra-burning man-haters? Where do myths about feminists come from? Whose interests do these myths serve?
- Listen: NPR, “Pageant Protest Sparked Bra-Burning Myth”

Feminist Thought

WEEK 5
Day 1: September 23rd
Discussion Topic: Marxism and Feminism
Discussion Question: What are the roots of inequality in capitalist societies?
- Song: Tammy Wynette, “I don’t wanna play house”

Day 2: September 25th
Discussion Topic: Global Economy and Women Migrant Workers
Discussion Question: How is patriarchy a social and economic structure?
- View: “Blue Elephants” documentary about migrant workers in a Malaysia
  http://vimeo.com/18617196
- Recommended Website: Domestic Workers Unite

WEEK 6
Day 1: September 30th
Discussion Topic: Feminist Standpoint Theory
Discussion Questions: Are scientists “objective”? How does a person’s categorical identity structure one’s knowledge? Why do some people see intersecting modes of oppression better than others?

Day 2: October 2nd
Discussion Topic: Intersectionality
Discussion Questions: What is the relationship between representation and domination? How do oppositional dichotomies make oppression seem natural?
- Read: Collins, Patricia H. “Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images,” Pp. 67-78, CW
- Song: Kanye West, “Gold Digger”

Feminist Theory 5
WEEK 7
Day 1: October 7th
Discussion Topic: Reproductive Rights
Discussion Questions: What is the social, not just individual, nature of reproductive rights? How are women’s decisions about reproduction shaped by others?

Day 2: October 9th
Topic: Post-Colonial Feminism
Discussion Questions: How do racism and the political, economic, and cultural effects of colonialism shape how non-Western women experience oppression? Are western feminists oppressive to non-western women?

WEEK 8
Day 1: October 15th – Meet on Tuesday
Topic: Post-Colonial Feminism

Day 2: October 16th
Discussion Topic: Women and Religion
Discussion Questions: Are women oppressed by religion? How do women use religion in agentic ways?
- Pop Culture Essay #2 due

WEEK 9
Day 1: October 21st.
Discussion Topic: The Panopticon
Discussion Questions: Who can see whom in the Panoptic structure? Who controls the Panopticon?
- Read: Foucault, Michel. “Pantopticism,” Pp. 195-228, CW

Day 2: October 23rd
Discussion Topic: Heteronormativity and the “Bible Belt Panopticon”
Discussion Questions: How is a person’s behavior and desires altered by Panopticons? How is heterosexuality enforced in our society? How is it constructed as the norm?
- View clip: Small Town Gay Bar

WEEK 10
Day 1: October 28th.
Discussion Topic: Feminist Qualitative Methods/Participant Observation Paper
- Read: Kleinman, Sherryl. Feminist Fieldwork Analysis (excerpt), Pp. 46-65, CW
Day 2: October 30th.
Discussion Topic: Patriarchy and the Panopticon
Discussion Questions: How is discipline embodied? Is patriarchy an embodied practice?

WEEK 11
Day 1: November 4th
Discussion Topic: Gender Constitution
Discussion Questions: What is gender? Is there a difference between sex and gender?

Day 2: November 6th
Discussion Topic: Masculinity and Gender Hegemony
Discussion Questions: What is the relationship between masculinity and gender hegemony? Are all masculinities equal?
  ▪ Read: Kimmel, Michael “Masculinity as Homophobia,” Pp. 119-135, CW

WEEK 12
Day 1: November 11th
Discussion Topic: Transgender Studies
Discussion Question: Are transgendered people born into the wrong body? How are transgender people pathologized in our society? Why is there so much hostility against transgender people?
  o View: Southern Comfort (start)

Day 2: November 13th
  o View: Southern Comfort (finish)
  ➔ Participant Observation Essay Due

WEEK 13
Day 1: November 18th
Discussion Topic
Discussion Questions: How does the ideology of ability determine the value of some sexual practices over others? How does thinking about sexuality and disability broaden the definition of sexual behavior?
  ▪ Read: Siebers, Tobin. “A Sexual Culture for Disabled People,” 37-52, CW

Day 2: November 20th
Discussion Topic: Queering Feminism
Discussion Questions: How is an emphasis on women’s rights exclusionary? How can feminists work to eradicate dichotomous gender categories?
Feminism’s Next Act

WEEK 14
Day 1: November 25th
Discussion Topic: Feminism Today
Discussion Questions: What’s the future of feminist theory?
  • TBA
     ➔ Popular Culture Essay #3 Due

Day 2: November 27th – THANKSGIVING BREAK!

WEEK 15
Day 1: December 2nd
  • Exam preparation/Review

Day 2: December 4th
  • In-Class Essay Exam